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Media Release
June 20, 2008

Biden Shuts Down Second Wilmington Property for Drug and Vice Crime

Wilmington, DE – Attorney General Beau Biden announced today that a second Wilmington property has been ordered shut down under Delaware’s Nuisance Abatement Act. At a hearing today in Superior Court a residential property at 303 North Broom Street in Wilmington’s Hilltop neighborhood was declared the site of drug and vice crime and was ordered closed by court order.

“For the second time in less than a month, we have taken action to make our community safer,” said Attorney General Joseph R. Biden, III. “We’re pleased that Judge Cooch imposed the conditions we sought and that the property will be shut down. The Delaware Department of Justice will continue to aggressively take action against property owners anywhere in our State who allow crime to flourish and bring down the quality of life.”

The Department of Justice argued that the property has been the site of regular drug activity, including multiple incidents that involved juveniles. Large amounts of illegal drugs have been seized on the premises, as well as weapons and ammunition. Following today’s Superior Court proceeding, Resident Judge Richard Cooch agreed with the Department of Justice that the property presented an immediate threat to the public health, safety and welfare and ordered that it be shut down until a permanent hearing is held. Moreover, the property’s owners have been ordered to have only police-supervised contact with the premises.

In August, 2007 Attorney General Biden launched a statewide effort to combat crime in Delaware under the state’s newly enhanced Drug Nuisance and Social Vices Abatement Act. Under the statute, enforcement actions can take a variety of forms, including closure of a property. Today’s ruling marks the fourth time that the Department of Justice has used this statute to secure the closure of a property by court order. Most recently, on June 2, 2008, a property in Wilmington’s Canby Park neighborhood was ordered shuttered immediately and its owner was required to vacate the premises.

The Delaware Department of Justice identifies nuisance properties up and down Delaware through its own investigations and cooperation with state and local police agencies, local authorities, civic associations, and neighborhood residents. Since August, 2007, the Department has issued more than 35 written notices to property owners in all three counties. These notices state that a nuisance exists on the property and give owners the choice of voluntarily cooperating to clean up the illegal activity, or defending themselves in court and being forced to clean up the crime by court order.

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